no means listen to the wretched project of destroying a crumb of what its greatest benefactor built for the adornment of the city.

If the steeple be rebuilt, it will shew pleasingly in the general north-west views of the Exchange; and let the citizens, who are proud of their steeples, remember that already their city has within a few years lost three of its church towers within half a mile of each other.

SR.

ON PAPER-HANGINGS.

BY MR. COWTAN.

Read before the Decorative Art Society on the 9th Instant.

Among the many articles of British manufacture that lay claim to our attention, few are of more importance than that denominated "Paper-hanging," and few have received less of the requisite care and study. Not only is it of importance in a commercial point of view, but it must be considered in some sort as a vehicle for the advancement and encouragement of the fine arts of the country.

The art of ornamenting the walls of apartments has been in use from a very distant period; among the ancient Egyptians the pictorial representations on the walls of their tombs may lead us to suppose that their houses were decorated in a similar manner. Among the Greek settlers in the south of Italy decorating the interior of their houses was paid great attention to; and the ruins of Pompeii and Herculaneum attest that the art was highly cultivated there: some of these designs, though wanting in artistic skill, yet possess remarkable brilliancy of colour. The houses of the rich patricians of Italy present numerous specimens of beautiful decorations; and the arabesques of Raffaello, and the rest of the Roman school, are perhaps the finest productions of this kind in the world.

Tapestries, as coverings to walls, were in great use for many centuries in Europe, and among the Eastern nations were known at a very remote period. Most tasteful and beautiful designs were employed in their manufacture; and the refined taste of Athens, and the talents of the first Italian artists, were called into requisition to furnish models from which to work these patterns; and those invaluable cartoons of Raffaello at Hampton Court, shew us how particular they were to procure the best designs and finest specimens of art to decorate and ornament their walls, a strong contrast with the character of taste of the present day, which is content with the productions of inferior artists whose taste and judgment have never been properly cultivated, and, except in some few instances, are totally deficient in those principles of true art which have been the study and direction of all who have arrived at excellence; and without a knowledge of these principles, no manufacture in which taste is required will ever reach even the length of mediocrity.

The capabilities of paper suggested the idea of applying it to the purposes of hangings for rooms, and though it has only been in use for little more than a century, it is nearly two hundred years since it was first applied to that purpose; and it has been used as a substitute for almost every other species of decoration. The varieties of subjects imitated in paper-hangings are very comprehensive, and successful attempts have been made to adapt them to the representation of architecture, sculpture, and painting, as well as arabesque designs, ornaments, and flowers. At first the aim seems to have been directed to imitations of tapestry, and to produce this a material called flock was employed, a kind of woollen cloth chopped small with a machine, strewed lightly with the finger and thumb over the paper, on which a pattern had been previously drawn with fat oil or varnish, and the different colour and tints being carefully blended, an appearance of tapestry was thus obtained. This method is said to have first originated in England, and was invented by Jerome Langer, who obtained a patent for it during the reign of Charles I., dated May 1st, 1634. We find, however, according to an old French work that a manufacture of this kind was carried on at Rouen some ten or fourteen years previously by a man named François, who was succeeded by his son, and who continued the business for fifty years after with great success. Originally the material was of an extremely coarse description, and the flock projected considerably from the paper. At Hampton Court specimens of the early productions may still be seen, mostly painted over in distemper, but the pattern can be distinctly traced. I have been enabled to procure a specimen of flock-paper which I am assured is not less than 110 years old; in this the surface is very coarse, although a great improvement upon the older fabrics.

In the reign of Queen Anne, paper-hangings were largely imported from China, and continue in fashion down to the present day. These hangings, though the outlines may be executed with stencils, are almost wholly done by hand, the colours of which are very rich and brilliant, exceeding in beauty almost anything we can produce in England. Dr. Ure states that the idea of paper-staining was borrowed from the Chinese, among whom it has been practised from time immemorial. It is curious to observe how systematically the Chinese have adhered to the same patterns and devices to be seen among the earliest drawings of that remarkable people; we do not find the least advancement from the remotest period to the present time.

Mr. Jackson, a manufacturer of paper-hangings at Battersea, published in the year 1754 a work on the invention of chiaro scuro, and the application of it to paper-hanging, with prints in illustration. This book was probably used as a sort of advertisement of his own manufacture, and contained many just and well-sustained remarks, shewing a cultivated and well-directed taste. He proposed, instead of adhering to the old system (for it seems that paper-hanging had reached some degree of perfection even then), to employ subjects of more interest than the mere repetition of flowers and ornaments, which prevailed so much, that instead of being a principal, as they were, they should be merely an elegant auxiliary to designs of more dignified character; as, for instance, copies of the most celebrated classic subjects, statues, and landscapes; he remarks, "that the persons who could not purchase the statues themselves, might have these prints in their places, and thus gratify the taste of the possessor, which is not seen in the expense of the article, but in the selection."

In speaking of the vulgar and gaudy patterns, frequently selected instead of tasteful and harmonious designs, he says, "Persons who prefer the unmeaning paper so generally met with to those done in this style, would prefer a fan to a picture of Raffaello, Carracchi, Guido, or Dominichino; and those who choose the Chinese manner ought to admire, in pursuit of the same taste, the crooked, disproportioned, and ugly, in preference to the straight, regular, and beautiful."

It is by this very means of ill-judgment in furnishing apartments that the true taste of the person is unthinkingly betrayed; those little and seemingly distant things offer the clue which leads to discovering the whole mind, and undoes perhaps all that character of being a true judge of the polite arts which they are so fond of establishing. It seems impossible that any mind truly formed can, without distaste, be capable of letting such objects in upon it through the eye; where the internal senses are well-proportioned and just, these monstrous objects of the external must be displeasing and offensive. In that breast where the softer sensations of humanity are in any particular degree, the love of beauty generally accompanies them, and the approbation of natural objects is the proof of these sensations existing in an individual, as the contrary taste is of the ill-formation or perversion of that mind which approves of preternatural appearances; there is a close analogy between the love of beauty in external objects and a mind truly disposed to the feeling of all the softer and most amiable sensations.

The prevailing unfounded idea that the English, as a people, are inferior to other nations in the talents for artistic design and invention; are, I am very glad to observe, fast being overturned by proofs that we are quite as capable, and in some instances more so than the artists of other countries, of producing designs of exquisite taste and workmanship. And I may here mention that the encouragement given to the art of design by the rebuilding of the Houses of Parliament, is in every way praiseworthy, and will give an impetus to native art it has never received since the days when the royal patronage was displayed on the very same spot, during the reign of Henry III., six centuries ago. It is sometimes necessary to bring to the recollection of those cavillers at British talent that, in many of the arts of design, we have far outstripped our contemporary brethren on the Continent. Among our early Saxon progenitors we find that they attained to higher proficiency in the art of MS. illumination than any Continental school. It is proved by early record that painting in oil was practised in England 200 years before the time of Van Eyke, who is called the inventor of it. And it is well known that until lately the French were far inferior to us in ornamental work. Why, then, do we now find that we are obliged to confess their superiority in this branch, when we know that patterns of paper-hangings (and I have myself seen them) exist, manufactured sixty years ago, equal, if not superior, to those executed in France at the present day? Several of the blocks used in the production I have also seen, and their beautiful workmanship far exceeds those in use for present purposes.

It is true that until within the last ten years a noxious tax, imposed during the time of Queen Anne, weighed down the spirit, and clogged the energies of the manufacturer; but the want of a proper national school of design was the grand evil, and kept in embryo the latent genius of English youth. These difficulties, it is pleasing to notice, are fast being overcome; and I hope soon to find our English name, proud as we all are of it, spoken of, not only as retaining its ancient glory, but being a pass-word to all other nations for all that is *talented* and *tasteful*, as well as for all that is noble and honourable.

About the year 1786, a Mr. Sherringham threw a new feature into the manufacture of paper-hanging. This gentleman, who had spent many years on the Continent, returned about this time to England, and established a business in Great Marlborough-street. His enterprising spirit and refined taste led him to engage a number of artists of first-rate ability—such men as Jones, Boileau, La Briere, and Fuzili; he was thus enabled to infuse into the art a style which for beauty and grace was not equalled before, nor has since been surpassed. Sherringham's productions were indeed characteristic of the true principles of art. From this establishment emanated the leading decorators of the present day, and the first houses in London built their fame upon the foundation he had constructed. Sherringham was, indeed, the Wedgewood of paper-stainers.

About this time the Messrs. Eckardt, who had a manufactory at Chelsea, produced designs of most exquisite workmanship. Besides the mode generally in use, they adopted a method of applying engraved copper-plates, to form the outlines, and by an underground of silver and gold, worked up by hand in varnish colours, effects of the most beautiful kind were obtained; they were highly illustrative of the ability of the English talent when properly applied. Their well-directed taste, their eager desire to advance as much as possible their undertaking, their steady endeavour to adopt only the most beautiful patterns, and their determination to get them up in the best manner, are lessons for some of our modern paper-stainers which it would be well for them to take to heart and learn, for they not only depreciate their own taste by producing, as in many cases they do, patterns which they are almost ashamed of when finished, but the character of the country suffers, and they lose the opportunity of improvement, while they prevent in a great measure the encouragement that would otherwise be bestowed.

The establishments of these gentlemen, though conducted with laudable spirit and enterprise, were destined to sink as they had risen; and the spirit of emulation ended with them.

From that time paper-staining in England kept on in its trodden path without much improvement, and without increasing taste. The French took up the ground that we had left, and their manufactures were in every way encouraged by the government of Napoleon, and they reached that standard of perfection their industry and perseverence so richly merited. But it is true, while speaking of the ability of the French in comparison with ours, and of their continuing in the road we had prepared for them, they had no such difficulties as we to contend with. While a heavy tax was laid on our productions, theirs were entirely free;

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